

the call centers late into night. Americans for Prosperity had not seen such engagement since the groundswell of opposition to Obamacare.



Media coverage continued to be brutal. The *New York Times*, scrutinizing inside jokes in Kavanaugh's 1983 Georgetown Prep yearbook, declared, "Kavanaugh's Yearbook Page Is 'Horrible, Hurtful' to a Woman It Named."⁴⁷ To interpret Kavanaugh's cryptic description of himself as a "Renate alumnus" (sic), the *Times* relied on his classmates Richard S. Madaleno Jr., a Maryland state senator and unsuccessful candidate for governor, whose campaign ads featured him kissing his male spouse and telling voters that he would "deliver progressive results and stand up to Donald Trump," and William Fishburne, a political associate of Madaleno's.⁴⁸ The article strongly suggested that "Renate alumnus" was a boastful—and highly disrespectful—claim to have had sex with a girl who was in Kavanaugh's circle of friends.

The classmates implicated by the *New York Times* strenuously insisted that the reference was not sexual and that none of them had had sexual relations with Renate. They said that they attended each other's dances and prep school functions and had maintained the friendship through the ensuing decades. The men the *Times* relied on to decode the yearbook references, they said, would have had no idea what they meant.

The media also succeeded in tracking down Mark Judge, who was lying low on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He had long been open about the serious alcohol problems of his youth, even writing a book about his experiences.⁴⁹ Later, after a political conversion, he had become a conservative writer.⁵⁰ The media were eager to publicize rumors of his wild youth. They showed much less interest in examining Ford's background.⁵¹

While the media's excavation of early-eighties Georgetown Prep could not have been more thorough, the culture of Holton-Arms, the toasty girls' school Ford attended (motto: "I will find a way or make one"), was scrupulously unexplored. Yearbooks from Ford's era were

filled with discussions of “Beer and Boys” and how they made parties better. Descriptions of drinking games such as quarters and beer pong, photos of teenagers drinking beer, and jokes about skirting drinking laws were a feature of every volume.

A two-page spread in the 1982 yearbook under the headline “Celebrate Good Times” was devoted to partying and drinking: “The party experience is definitely not to be missed. Few have experienced the joy of waking up to find their house creatively redecorated with bottles, cans, and kids. The bottles and cans even manage to find their way to the front yard and street. Your neighbors will love the additions as more and more are discovered by the spring thaw...then comes the infamous BEACH WEEK, where the supreme challenge is how much partying you can fit into 7 days. Who is going to win this year?”

The pages that follow contain references to “Playboy Bunnies” and things that are “X-rated” as well as pictures of beer and rum. The same volume boasts a cavalcade of off-color jokes about “furburgers vs. Cheeseballs,” “6 Caucasian females, one Caucasian male,” and “Halloween-whores,” as well as a lewd riff on the “tube snake boogie.”

The following year’s edition contained this description of a party: “As you descend into a family’s treasured basement, the muffle of parents locked in a closet can be heard from upstairs. A few shoves and one big push, and you find yourself in the center of things: things such as elbows, cigarettes, beers and noise. Unsticking your feet from marshy floor, you make your way towards the keg where one or two senior boys huff and puff but the tap only trickles.”

Among the memories enshrined in the 1983 yearbook (when Ford was a junior) are hanging out at a sex shop called the Pleasure Chest and drinking daiquiris. One student was said to have enjoyed “Pepermint Schnapps night at E.J.’s” when a group of juniors drove into D.C. Reflecting on a year of youthful high spirits, Ford’s classmates recorded for posterity: “Lastly, one cannot fail to mention the climax of the junior social scene, the party. Striving to extend our educational experience beyond the confines of the classroom, we played such intellectually stimulating games as Quarters, Mexican Dice, and

everyone's favorite, Pass-Out, which usually resulted from the aforementioned two."

This depiction of Holton-Arms as Studio 54 on the Potomac may be nothing more than adolescent posturing, and only the alumnae can judge how accurately it reflects their social life in the early 1980s. But it is clear that a lack of vigilance by the yearbook's faculty adviser and bacchanalian extracurricular activities were by no means unique to Georgetown Prep.



The media frenzy produced an almost violently partisan atmosphere. An anti-Kavanaugh mob chased Senator Ted Cruz and his wife out of Fiola, a D.C. restaurant. Claiming responsibility, a group called Smash Racism DC warned: "This is a message to Ted Cruz, Bret Kavanaugh, Donald Trump, and the rest of the racist, sexist, transphobic, and homophobic right-wing scum. You are not safe. We will find you. We will expose you. We will take from you the peace you have taken from so many others."⁵²

To spare the Kavanaughs that kind of abuse, friends brought them casseroles and other food. They couldn't be in public without attracting protesters, or worse. One day, finding herself with more cupcakes from generous friends than her family could eat, Ashley took some to the marshals who were protecting the house. The marshals couldn't eat them all, so she offered the extras to the press who were camped outside the house. News quickly spread on social media that she had handed out cupcakes from the posh bakery Sprinkles, a rare moment of friendly coverage. Ashley hadn't put much thought into it, but she knew from her many years with President Bush that the cameramen and photographers don't usually have a political ax to grind; they are just nice people doing their jobs. No one expected the two dozen flower arrangements that arrived from complete strangers expressing concern for the family or the mountains of supportive letters that Ashley would reread when she needed encouragement.